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Wayne F. Wilcox, Olga Padilla-Zakour assume leadership of food science and technology department at Cornell University's Geneva Experiment Station

By Joe Ogrodnick

Wayne F. Wilcox and Olga Padilla-Zakour have been appointed chair and associate chair, respectively, of the department of food science and technology (FST) at Cornell University's Geneva Experiment Station. The appointments were effective July 1.

"In a new leadership model for the department, Dr. Wilcox will have the lead responsibilities for the usual chair activities overall in academic program and climate issues, faculty and personnel oversight, fiscal and facilities oversight, and external relations, while Dr. Padilla-Zakour will have lead responsibilities for strategic planning and mentoring junior faculty," said Barbara Knuth, senior associate dean in Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS).

Wilcox, whose research and extension program frequently collaborates with the New York grape and wine industries, is a professor of plant pathology at the Geneva Station. Padilla-Zakour is an associate professor of food processing and the director of the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship.

"I am extremely honored to be asked to assume the chairmanship of FST, a department with a long and proud history and an essential complement to the other, more agricultural production-oriented departments at the station," said Wilcox. "Although my academic training is in a distinctly different discipline, I have interacted with the FST enology program on a regular basis for the past 14 years in my position as leader of the grape pathology program and through service on various committees that help organize and coordinate the various research, extension, and teaching programs in enology and viticulture within CALS."

Wilcox added that he is very fortunate to have Padilla-Zakour as an associate chair and plans to rely heavily on her expertise on both technical and cultural issues unique to the broad discipline of food science. He'll also seek regular input on both general and specific matters from other colleagues within the department. "I believe that everyone in the department and at the station is dedicated to the mission of serving agricultural producers, processors, and consumers in New York and beyond," Wilcox said. "My job in FST will be to help facilitate this process in coordination with our sister department in Ithaca and allied departments throughout the College."

"The department of food science and technology is in an exciting transitional and building stage, with the addition of two new faculty and an extension educator in the last two years and two additional new faculty slated to join in January 2009," said Padilla-Zakour. "It is of fundamental importance that we mentor these new individuals, and that we work closely with our colleagues in the department of food science in Ithaca to improve collaboration and productivity in the field of food science. Wayne and I are committed to lead the department in a manner that will ensure that Cornell will remain the number one food science program in the country."

"I am very pleased that Wayne has agreed to take on the responsibility of chair of FST and Olga has agreed to be associate chair. Both will have distinct responsibilities that will be most important to the future development of the department," said station director Tom Burr. "Wayne's collaborative work with the grape and wine industries of New York make him a very desirable person for the job and a candidate who was embraced by both administration and by the FST department. The combination of these two very capable scientists provides a strong team that will be essential as the department continues to add new faculty and strengthen in several areas. I thank both of them for taking on these responsibilities and also extend a special thanks to Chang Y. (Cy) Lee for his dedication and strong leadership that allowed the department to prosper during his time as chair."



Wayne F. Wilcox



Olga Padilla-Zakour

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